



Montpelier Ruritan Club

THE PICKUP EXPRESS



News and Ideas for Adopt-a-Highway Volunteers

Spring cleanup set for April 29

Shed that winter coat because spring has sprung, and it's time to start the spring cleaning. Mark your calendars for Virginia's Statewide Spring Cleanup on April 29. Bring your group out of the winter-long hibernation to pitch in on that date.

While the spring cleanup is usually held on the Saturday before Historic Garden Week in Virginia, the date was moved this year because that Saturday fell on Easter weekend.

Springing into action to make an effort to beautify state roads has become as traditional as blooming daffodils. Get ready because the 18th annual statewide spring litter pickup is approaching. Organizations and groups from all over Virginia find their way to their favorite pickup spot year after year.

Virginia gets a good cleaning from volunteer groups twice a year. With many groups continuing to take pride in their environment, there is no question that Virginia will sparkle a little brighter at the end of April.

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Earth Day
April 22

Spring Cleanup
April 29

FAQ of the month

Q: How do I adopt?

A: Contact the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for an application packet or apply on-line at VirginiaDOT.org. Call 1-800 PRIDE-VA (1-800-774-3382), e-mail adoptahighway@VirginiaDOT.org or find the Adopt-a-Highway coordinator in your area on VDOT's Web site. Once you have completed and submitted the application, and VDOT approves it, you can obtain safety vests, orange bags and important safety training information. In one to two months, your signs will be erected and you can begin to clean your adopted section of highway. For more information, please see the Adopt-a-Highway brochure at VirginiaDOT.org

Clean Commute Day

Ridefinders, a company based in Central Virginia that promotes carpooling and the use of the Richmond area bus system, is the lead for this year's Clean Commute Day that will be held on May 5. Ridefinders provides commuters and employers with transit information. They will use this event to kickoff their annual Clean Air Campaign.

MAY 2006

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Commissioner's Column



This is the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) Centennial year, and much has been made of the agency celebrating 100 years of transportation excellence.

We are proud of our engineering marvels such as the Big Walker Mountain Tunnel on I-77 and the award-winning Varina-Enon Bridge connecting Chesterfield and Henrico counties. We are also proud of our ability to build mega projects such as the Woodrow Wilson Bridge on time and on budget. It is the largest project currently under construction in the country.

But we can also be proud of the appearance of our roadways, largely due to the efforts of our Adopt-a-Highway volunteers, who have been out cleaning the Commonwealth's roadsides since 1988.

Adopt-a-Highway volunteers clean more than 13,000 miles of highways – about one-quarter of Virginia's state-maintained roads – and provide the equivalent of roughly \$3 million annually in litter-control services to the state. Coming from the fiscal side of the house, that is a savings that I truly appreciate.

So while VDOT celebrates 100 years of transportation excellence, my hat is also off to you, the Adopt-a-Highway volunteers, for 18 years of roadside cleanliness excellence.

Greg

Gregory A. Whirley

Why I volunteer

Peter Obrazzka is a solo act for Adopt-a-Highway. He adopted Airport Road next to I-64 in Williamsburg more than 20 years ago – before the Adopt-a-Highway program was formed. Now 74 years old, Obrazzka shows no signs that he will quit anytime soon. Originally from Germany, the U.S. Army veteran retired in Virginia because of the Commonwealth's beautiful scenery. He has completed more than 75 pickups and put in more than 300 hours.

Why did you start picking up? "I thought Airport Road was beautiful because it had two lakes and rolling hills, and I hated to see it trashed. I told Assistant Resident Engineer J.T. Kelly that it should be cleaned. He had it cleaned up and I just continued to clean it after that."

Quote: "Trash doesn't grow on trees. Men put it there, and we need to pick it up!"

How I help the environment: "I collect four bags of trash on a weekly basis. I used to recycle some of the goods. I would pick up religiously every Sunday."

The funniest thing that happened to me during a pickup: "I was picking up one day and a car pulled over. Out jumped a woman saying that she was going to report me to my boss because I wasn't picking up all the trash."

How I spend my spare time: "Depending on the season, I ski, and my wife and I walk daily. I also volunteer at the Farmer's Market and as a tourist guide and translator for Colonial Williamsburg."



Assign-a-Highway update

The Upper Tennessee River Roundtable received a \$40,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to promote the Assign-a-Highway program throughout the state. Laura Hamilton has been hired as the statewide Assign-A-Highway coordinator. She will travel across the Commonwealth to conduct 20 presentations introducing the program to communities in Virginia. She will also develop a user's guide and a Web site for the program.

Under the Assign-a-Highway program, the court system can order a probationer to pick up litter every two weeks on a two-mile stretch of road. The program is implemented when all judges in a region commit to using it, and the counties hire a litter control coordinator with law enforcement power to oversee it.

So far, seven counties – Russell, Tazewell, Giles, Wise, Lee, Dickenson and Buchanan – participate in the program. VDOT will provide bags, Assign-a-Highway signs attached to Adopt-A-Highway signs, and special markers to designate sections for probationers.

Assign-A-Highway participants clean roads every two weeks, so these counties should definitely start to see a cleaner, greener Virginia.

Following are five ways to help Virginia's environment:

1. Value wetlands.

Wetlands are bogs, marshes or swamps – both tidal and inland – that offer valuable fish and wildlife habitats, purify water resources, trap and filter pollutants, and help control soil erosion. Support and encourage constructed wetlands when and where they enhance nature. Contact your local wetlands board, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission or The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality before draining or filling wetlands.

2. Be involved in your community government.

Your community development should reflect the values and priorities of its residents. Be a part of the solution by making sure your community's comprehensive plan respects citizen involvement.

3. Promote science education to better understand our natural resources.

Call your school's principal or superintendent and suggest that teachers use programs such as Project WILD, Aquatic WILD, Project Learning Tree and Project WET. Promote environmental awareness among adults, too. Choose an environmental speaker or project for club meetings, church groups and professional societies. Encourage these groups to adopt a project that includes specific activities on a recurrent basis to improve the environment.

4. Be a smart Virginia traveler.

When vacationing or just traveling to another part of the state, remember to practice the good stewardship tactics that you employ at home. Carry litter bags with you, and keep glass and paper separate. Many gas stations and rest areas have recycling bins in which you can deposit recyclables.

5. Give the Bay a hand.

The Chesapeake Bay drains nearly two-thirds of Virginia, and its restoration requires everyone's help. Learn more about your local watershed and "BayScaping" – landscaping that encourages conservation, diversity and beneficial plants – as well as other tips by calling (804) 775-0951. Learn how to monitor water quality in a neighborhood stream; call the Izaak Walton League at 1 (800) BUGIWL (284-4953) and ask about "Save Our Streams."

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Tree planting set

Eagle Scout Troop 3, sponsored by Braddock Street United Methodist Church in Winchester, will plant trees at the New Market Rest Area on I-81 just north of Harrisonburg. Eight trees will be planted including five American Hophornbeam by the scouts. Three dogwoods provided by VDOT's Staunton District will also beautify the area. The district will deliver mulch and provide tools including safety vests and traffic cones for a safe work environment. Eagle Scout Josh Gomke came up with the idea that inspired the troop to approach VDOT with the project. The planting was set for March 25.

Caps off to Winchester Kiwanis Club

Winchester's Kiwanis Club decided to have a "Hub Cap Dinner" after every 25 hub caps they collect on their Adopt-a-Highway site. Because their pickup site is on I-81 ramps, hub caps are abundant. The club will display the collected hub caps during the dinner. Don't expect a nagging mom to say "Caps off at the table!" at this dinner.



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Cleanup Crew Working

Stories from the Roadside

Gone Fishing

During their fall pickup in Fairfax, the Metric Handyman group found barbecue restaurant grease, a brand new fishing rod and from a local towing company, Polaroid film and pictures. At least there's grease to fry the fish caught with the new fishing rod. Catch a big one and send us the pictures!

New Neighbor

Neighbors of Red Hill Road found a car registration and a pregnancy test during their fall pickup. Now these neighbors know what type of car to expect to see rushing to the hospital in nine months!

Last Call

Bottles of rum, gin, brandy, Jack Daniels, vodka, Crown Royal and beer were found during a spring cleanup. The Greenspring Plantation Homeowners weren't too surprised when they also picked up cigarette butts and lottery tickets. It must have been quite a party!

Flapping in the wind

Along with their two bags full of recyclables, the Southcreek Kids group found a mud flap from a semi-truck during their spring cleanup. Based on the writing, the flap came from a Des Moines, Iowa-based company. Will these clues lead the Southcreek detectives to the litter bugs? Find out on the next CSI.

